

TILAK

THE TORCH BEARER OF SWARAJ

Vishnuchandra Sharma



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Translation : Suresh Awasthi



PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

2018 (Saka 1939)

© Publications Division

Price : ₹ 95.00

PD
BN

ISBN: 978-81-230-2790-6

CHL-ENG-TR-176-2017-18

Published by the Director General, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Soochna Bhawan, C.G.O. Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

website : <http://www.publicationsdivision.nic.in>



Editor : Manogyan. R. Pal

Cover Design : Asha Saxena

Sales Centres: • Soochna Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, **New Delhi-110003**
• Hall No. 196, Old Secretariat, **Delhi-110054** • 701, B-Wing, Kendriya Sadan, Belapur, **Navi Mumbai-400614** • 8, Esplanade East, **Kolkata-700069** • 'A' Wing, Rajaji Bhawan, Besant Nagar, **Chennai-600090** • Press Road, Near Govt. Press, **Thiruvananthapuram-695001**. • Room No. 204. 2nd Floor CGO Towers Kavadiguda, **Hyderabad- 500080** • 1st Floor, 'F' Wing, Kendriya Sadan, Koramangala, **Bangalore-560034** • Bihar State Co-operative Bank Building, Ahoka Rajpath, **Patna-80004** • Hall No. 1, 2nd Floor, Kendriya Bhawan, Sector -H, Aliganj, **Lucknow-226024** • Ambica Complex, 1st Floor, Paldi, **Ahmedabad-380007** • House No. 04, Pensionpara Road, P.O. Silpukhuri, **Guwahati-781003**

Typesetter : S S Graphix, G. P. Main Road, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110 019
Printed at : Viba Press PVT.LTD.

Dedication

Dedicated to
Mahesh Chandra,
Manisha and
Richa

The three generations of Independent
India

For moving ahead amid the new challenges

Preface

From my father Pt. Krishnachandra Sharma, I had inherited a picture. This book contains the story of the same picture. In this story you will get to know a simple and honest citizen and the period of his nationalist struggles. I had heard from my father about the personal virtuosity of Tilak, a fearless campaign in the political movement of his time.

The day when Ashok ji asked me to write a biography of Tilak I was confronted with ‘gomukh’ of rugged mountains of our country. I searched and went through several biographics of Tilak published in Marathi, English and Hindi language. Every biography was the writer’s account of how he saw and thought about his icon. And I had prepared a new album of Tilak’s life selecting pictures from the larger album of these books.

This biography reminds us about a fearless civil rights activist and a capable freedom fighter. As a citizen ‘Tilak was a pious and powerful like the ‘gomukh’ – and as a freedom fighter he gave the basic mantra of Swarajya or self rule to the Indians.

Tilak’s life is like a open book. I have written the story of the same book. This story flows in the veins of India as the Ganges, emerging from the ‘gomukh’. Every fearless Indian feels proud in his heart of Tilak’s struggles, his selfless service and his firmness and resoluteness.

I have tried to understand the life of Tilak from his Marathi biography written by Tambekar and Jog. I am grateful to them and other writers who have helped me to understand the life and character of Tilak by going through his personal letters and copies of “*Kesari*” and “*Maratha*” edited by him, I have been able to understand deeply that Tilak was never

alone in his personal life and national struggle. Until his last breath he was a complete Indian-alive, fearless and a speaking India.

Vishnuchandra Sharma

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Childhood

It was 1940. I was eight years old. It was the time when my father, used to lead national movements and big processions. One day I saw him looking at a picture without blinking his eyes and then he put a garland around it. He had told me that the picture was of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. It was Tilak who coined the slogan swarjya ‘mera janmasiddha adhikar hai’ (self-rule is my birth right).

Situation prevailing at that time

It was an year after the birth of Tilak in 1857 that the first war of Independence the was fought. It however failed. Queen Victoria of Britain had taken over the authority of governance from the East india company into her own hands. The entire country was in the grip of despair and embroiled with ignoranance and backwardness. While on one hand, untouchability casteism, and social evils like child marriage and other superstitions were rampant in the country on the other hand. British rulers did not trust Indians. This was the time when leaders and social reformers like Swami Dayanand, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekanand brought about social and religious awakening in India. In Maharashtra, this was accomplished by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule in particular. He launched a vigorous movement against casteism and untouchability. Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar is another name which is remembered alongside Mahatma Phule in this movement. ‘Nibandh-mala (Essay series) inspired the youth of Maharashtra. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade also did great work in the social field and established ‘Prarthana Samaj’.

The British authorities were determined to take revenge on rebellious people and Indians were looked down upon as inferior people. Indian judges were not permitted to hear the cases of Britishers. To suppress the voice of (Indian) language newspapers, they had imposed 'The Vernacular Press Act'. In 1877, South India experienced a severe drought led to death of millions of people. But the British authorities in India were more concerned about Queen Victoria's royal-court to be held in England than the people affected by drought. Anguished by the atrocities of Britishers a few jealous individuals killed some British officers. Dissatisfaction was growing in public. In 1885, the Indian National Congress had come into existence. English educated Indians had joined this party. These Congress leaders were then opposing the British atrocities by simply passing resolutions. They had full faith in the magnanimity of the Britishers. These leaders were called soft liners- naram dal.

But Tilak was different from them . He was not a man to be content with passing of resolutions alone. He believed in open criticism instead of false praise. Through his '*Maratha*' and '*Kesari*' dailies he raised his voice strongly against the atrocities of Britisters, which had a great impact on the youth of the country. Tilak wanted to make Congress a people's institution. Those days there were two other prominent leaders in the country Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. This trinity was famous as Lal Bal Pal.

In 1905, when Lord Curzon divided Bengal into two parts Tilak stood up and opposed that decision strongly and for the first time, wind of political awakening swept the entire country. This provided impetus to 'Swadeshi movement and boycott of foreign goods. If was Tilak who first gave the indigenous slogan in the country " Swaraj is our birth right and I shall have it."

Thus, it was Tilak who was the founder of Swarajya (Home Rule) and non-cooperation movements of Gandhiji. Gandhiji used to say that

‘Tilak’s life is like an open book and because of Tilak’s efforts homerule (swarajya) has become many years closer.

Birth and Education

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born on July 23, 1856 at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra. His childhood name was Keshav Rao. He was also called as Balwantrao. He was affectionately called as Bal.

His father’s name was Gangadhar Rao. His father was earlier a teacher and then became an Inspector of primary schools. He was given this post as an award by the education department for his text books on Marathi and grammar.

Tilak’s mother was religious by nature. They had three daughters too. Bal had inherited knowledge and talent from his father and religious temperament from his mother. At the age of five on the day of Dussehra, Bal Gangadhar Tilak was admitted to school. His sacred thread ceremony

was held at the age of eight years.

From the very beginning, Bal was quite intelligent in mathematics and sanskrit. There is an interesting anecdote of his childhood. Bal Gangadhar’s father used to read aloud Ban bhatt’s “*kadambari*” rhythmically.



The young boy liked it immensely, and asked the book from his father. His father put out a condition if he would solve a tough mathematics problem he could have the book. The boy accepted the condition and solved the difficult question. His parents were very pleased and the boy got the desired book.

Bal used to go to the city school of Pune. If any question on maths was given to him he used to solve it immediately.

Bal was very conscious of his self respect. Once some students of his class littered peanut shells in the classroom. When the teacher entered, he was very much annoyed and asked, who has done it. Nobody came forward. Then the teacher started beating the boys one by one. When Bal's turn came, he refused to be caned, because he had not done that act. Then the teacher asked him to tell the name of the boy who had done it but he was also not ready to reveal his name.

When Bal was ten years old his mother expired. At the age of sixteen, his father also passed away. Just before his death, Bal's father had fixed his marriage with Tapi Bai the daughter of Ballal Bal. At the time of wedding, Bal was asked – what do you want in dowry – money, clothes and ornaments,? Bal only asked for books. Bal's father had left behind only a meager amount of money for him. Bal had to manage the expenses for the education of his siblings with this amount.

Bal overcame all hurdles successfully and moved ahead. In 1872, he joined Deccan college after passing the matriculation examination. During those days, Bal was quite frail and he appeared weak as compared to his wife. So his friends used to tease him. But he was a strong willed person. After joining college he made up his mind to improve his health and started doing rigorous exercises. Bal was fond of swimming. He used to remain still for hours in water. He also used to dive quite deep. Besides, he was also fond of wrestling and gymnastics. He also took good care of his eating habits. He used to take plenty of milk, butter, bread, fruits and vegetables in his meal. Unlike other boys, he kept himself away from

smoking etc. Once his teacher was surprised to see him swimming and exercising during study period and he objected. Bal replied instantly and said, - “ I do not want to appear in the examination this year.” In the first year of college he devoted his time body building. As a result, he could not clear most of his exams that year.

He was neither fond of outdoor activities nor a bookworm. Bal used to force those students to exercise who shied away from physical exercise and used to spoil their health by taking drugs. He used to gate-crash into their rooms and break all those bottles. One of his friends was so delicate that he used to spread flowers on his bed before sleeping. Once Bal Gangadhar Tilak entered the room of that delicate boy through a window and turned upside down his bed of flowers. He put a chit on the bed in which he wrote- ‘you are hereby warned not to repeat this act.’” There is no gainsaying in the fact that Bal’s warning did work.

During those days red round turban (pugree) angarkha (loose upper garment), dhoti, dupatta and ghethi or *deccani* shoes having upwardly curved toe was the dress of Bal Gangadhar Tilak . At the time of having meals he used to wear silk dhoti or ‘sola’ and he followed this ritual everywhere. Naughty, straight forward and outspoken Bal Gangadhar Tilak was nicknamed as Mr Blunt by his college friends.

In College, Bal used to study different books instead of text books. During those days he made a deep study of Sanskrit literature, western philosophy, vedic literature and astronomy and mathematical astrology. He was very talented from an early age. He used to surprise his teachers by solving the tough questions of maths published in Cambridge mathematical journal.

Bal passed the B.A. examination in 1877 with a first division. After two years he attained the LLB degree.

During his student life, Tilak came in close contact with renowned social reformer Sudhakar Agarkar, who was doing his M.A. Those days

while Tilak was impressed by social reformer Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, he was also searching for new avenues with Agarkar. Chiplunkar was a great supporter of English Education and he used to term it as ‘milk of tigress’.

After doing his LLB Bal Gangadhar Tilak engaged himself in social work.



Teacher and Journalist

New English School

In 1879, the three friends jointly established 'New English School'. In January 1880 the school was inaugurated. Chiplunkar called it victory flag of the auspicious day. In the history of Maharashtra this school proved to be a powerful treasure house of the development of school education.

Chiplunkar and Tilak were made the founder Director and teacher of the school. At the end of four years there were about one thousand students in the school and there were classes upto the matric level. In the first year Tilak did not take a single penny as salary.

The then British government appointed an Education Commission under William Hunter. When the commission came to Pune on a visit Mr. Hunter inspected the school and found it to be better than government schools.

In 1882, Vishnu Shastri passed away but Tilak stood firm on his mission. He was in favour of national education. To achieve this goal he chalked out a plan for running a less expensive education system in India. In this plan he laid emphasis on sacrifice and renunciation.

Maratha and Kesari

Publication of the dailies-*Maratha and Kesari* began in 1881. This was the second stage of Tilak's social service. During those days Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar was publishing a monthly magazine 'Nibandha Mala.'

It was well acclaimed in the literary world of Maharashtra and had a good impact. A member of Yuvak Mandal (youth club) Mr. Namjoshi was bringing out an English weekly *Deccan star* for quite some time. Periodicals like *Gyan*, *Prakash*, *Kiran*, *Shivaji* and *Gyan Chakshu* were also being published from Pune, at the time when *Maratha* was being published. Namjoshi merged his *Deccan star* with the *Maratha*. Tilak became the editor for *Maratha* and Agarkar edited *Kesari*.

It was Tilak who had suggested the name of *Kesari* for the Marathi newspaper. For printing purposes Keshav Ballalish Sathe's non-functional press was taken on lease. On the front page of *Kesari*, the following shloka (Sanskrit versa) of Panditraj Jagannath was being published prominently-

Sthiti no re dadhyah
Kshanmapi madandhekshan sakhe
Gajashreninath twamiha jatilayam banbhavi
Asau rumbhibhrantiya
kharankhar vidravit maha
gurugravgramah swapiti
girigaribhe haripati

This sloka inspired patriotism - “intoxicated elephant, you must not stay in this isolated forest even for a second. In this hilly cave lies the king of lions who has broken into pieces even the most huge rocks with his claws.”

The first issue of *Kesari* came out on Jan 4, 1881. Two days later, *Maratha* also came out. In the main article in the seventh issue of *Kesari*, ‘boycott’ was explained candidly “without fighting with the government, public will not get anything. At the time when *Kesari* came out, there was no future for journals or periodicals of Indian languages. People thought



that only English papers can be successful. But Tilak was a visionary, he knew it well that to reach to the people, one will have to take the help of the language of the people. During those days though literary writing was done in Marathi language but this was not quite appropriate for the newspaper. Therefore, Tilak and his colleagues worked very hard to give a new face to Marathi language. As a result within a year, 1800 copies of *Kesari* were being sold. Due to Kolhapur case print order rose to around 3500 copies and within two years, *Kesari*'s circulation was highest among the papers of Indian languages.

Kolhapur incident

Kesari and *Maratha* supported the cause of Indian princely states and rights of Indian princes. The British government wanted to keep

these princely states under their grip. The British government had declared Maharaj Shivaji Rao of Kolhapur as insane like the Prince of Baroda. This was the handiwork of Rai Bahadur Madhavpur Barve, whom the British government had got appointed as Diwan (Court Minister) of Kolhapur. People were of the firm belief that the king was not insane. A meeting was held in Pune on 23 Nov, 1881. Nana saheb Bhide exposed this conspiracy He emphatically told that a mother of an adopted dynasty was also involved in this conspiracy. The king was cruelly imprisoned.

Bhide published these letters of Barve in the newspapers. These letters were first published in Pune's '*Gyan Prakash*' and *Kesari* also published these letters and even challenged Barve to prove them false in the court.

In fact these letters were forged. But by this conspiracy, Barve got a chance to settle scores with his enemies. He filed a case of criminal defamation against five persons – (1) Nana Bhide (2) Keshav Narayan Bakhle (3) Waman Govind (4) Bal Gangadhar Tilak , editor *Maratha* and (5) Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, editor *Kesari*.

Agarkar and Tilak pleaded Guilty. Tilak, Agarkar and Bakhle were sentenced to four months simple imprisonment each, while Bhide and Ranade were awarded simple imprisonment for two year each. Both were also fined one thousand rupees a piece. In the prison, Tilak lost 24 pounds in weight. After 101 days Tilak and Agarkar were released from the jail and people gave a grand reception to them.

Deccan Education Society

The Directors of 'New English School formed an institution by the name of 'Deccan Education Society.' Sir William Waiderburn, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade. Dr. Ramkrishna Bhandarkar and Mr. S.S Kunthe, took part in the meeting. Tilak had presented the proposal for the establishment of this society.

The Governor of Bombay. Sir James Ferguson had donated an amount of Rs. 1250 to the society. Impressed by this donation some people named the college as 'Ferguson Sahab college'. Prof. Apte was appointed its first Principal. Apte was a Sanskrit teacher. Kelkar taught English while Agarkar taught history and jurisprudence. Gole and Tilak were appointed to teach physics and maths respectively.

Gopal Krishna Gokhle also later on joined this institution as a teacher. Members of the society were given a monthly honorarium of Rs. 75 and were insured for Rs. 3000. There was also a provision for financial help in special cases (requirements). For it, there was an unwritten rule. For life members there was rule that if they earn some thing working anywhere else, they should give it to the society itself. Life membership was a very respected position. This ideal of sacrifice too was set by Tilak.



Differences with Friends and Social Reforms

After sometime the disputes developed among the directors of the society. The society had started getting some grants from the government hence some members opined that much sacrifice is not



needed. Apte before joining the Society used to write text books. Chiplunkar had a lithography press and a book store. Gokhale and Agarkar were not in favour of taking a tough stand on the issue of sacrifice and service. Tilak was also not ready to budge from his stand. Difference over these issue started building up.

In 1890, Tilak wrote a letter. In it he emphasized “If society is ready to accept my explanations about the rules, it is good, otherwise my resignation may be accepted because in such a prevailing situation, there can be no peace while working with you all and we will continue fighting among ourselves.” The resignation was accepted.

Tilak with tears in his eyes, bid adieu to his own society. Before, leaving the society Tilak had started teaching law to the students for which he was paid Rs. 150 per month.

His friends suggested him to start a cotton mill. With the help of two friends Tilak set up a factory in a place known as Latur during the reign of the Nizam. The affairs of the factory were looked after by Tilak's nephew. But there was not much profit from this and after some years the factory closed down.

There was also a rift with his friend Agarkar. Agarkar was among those people who gave priority to social reforms. On the contrary, Tilak laid stress on the political freedom. He gave second priority to social reforms. Towards the end of 1890, this dispute sharpened. Bombay's well known social worker Bairamji Malabari suggested to introduce a “Age of Consent” bill in the imperial council of Viceroy. There were three main features of the bill – (1) sexual relation with a girl below the age of 12, should be treated as a crime (2) if a girl is married at a very early age, she should have the right to divorce on attaining maturity and (3) the man who marries a minor girl will not have the right to compel his wife to live with him.

With the introduction of this Bill child-marriage and polygamy became debated issues. Veteran social reformers Ranade and Bhandarkar supported the Bill. Tilak and Chiplunkar were against this bill.

Tilak's Ordeal

Tilak was neither an opponent of social reforms nor was he an orthodox traditional Hindu. But he was not in favour of carrying out social reforms with the help of British government.

Tilak and his colleagues, instead of supporting this Bill put forth some constructive suggestions which were as under-

(1) Girls should not be married before the age of 16 yrs (2) Boys should not be married before the age of twenty (3) A man should not marry after attaining the age of forty (4) If a man wants to marry the second time he should marry a widow only (5) Consumption of alcohol must be prohibited completely (6) Practice of sale of grooms and brides (dowry system) should be stopped completely. (7) Widows must not be shaved off. (8) Those who accept these reforms should donate one tenth of their income for social work.

The reformers' group did not respond to these suggestions. Thus, exploring his case, Lokmanya Tilak wrote in '*Kesari*' – '*Kesari*' has never shied off from the reform or putting an end to those evils which are prevalent in the country. Rather, it has been of the opinion that those should be removed in a gradual manner. But the reformers wanted to enact a law overnight instead of treading in a gradual manner. "We want to carry out reforms after creating awareness gradually."

Tilak followed a leftist revolutionary ideology, whereas in religious matters he was fiercely rightist and traditional. But the fact was that he did not believe in doing anything secretly. He used to say, 'there is much similarity between social and political problems. We want to bring reforms in our country. The British government and the Indian society, both are deeply rooted, so we have to do our job very carefully. If we want to

bring political reforms with mutual consent then why are we in a hurry for social reforms? This can prove to be suicidal too.

Tilak followed what he preached. He gave his daughter English education. He married her only after she attained the age of sixteen. An incident of 1894, reveals how liberal he was. Tilak was leading the procession of Ganapati immersion. An untouchable boy of eight years was crying from a window. The boy wanted immersion his Ganapati too in the river. Tilak went into his house, brought the boy along and included the untouchable boy's Ganapati in his own Ganapati procession. About the untouchable, he even once said, "Even if God himself comes to me and says that he has created untouchability, I will not accept him as a God."

On one more issue Tilak confronted Agarkar. A child widow by the name of Pandit Ramabai was running an institution for orphan women in Pune, which was known as Sharda Sadan. It was alleged that women were being converted into Christianity in that institution. Therefore Tilak was opposed to it.

In *Kesari* he wrote against this, Agarkar and other reformers were in favour of Sharda Sadan. When *Kesari* started writing against these evils, Agarkar snapped his relation with *Kesari* and *Maratha* in 1891. Thus Tilak became the Director of both *Maratha* and *Kesari*.



Entry of Tilak in Politics

Though Tilak had entered public life five years ahead of the establishment of the Congress, his initiation into politics actually happened in 1889. In that year the Congress session was held in Bombay. Lala Lajpat Rai and Gopal Krishna Gokhale also attended the Congress session the same year. Tilak and Namjoshi engaged themselves whole heartedly in the work of Bombay session. At that time he collected Rs 1000 from the city of Pune. After two months, the second session of Bombay Provincial Congress was held in May 1889.

This was the time when agitational movements were being held for constitutional reforms and opposition to the British regime was treated as a sedition. The group of reformers also were not openly opposing the Britishers. They were adopting a policy of treading in this mission very carefully and Tilak laid emphasis on provoking people. Tilak had learnt from his personal experience that simply adopting a resolution had no impact on the British government. Despite passing a resolution, Bombay government did not refrain from earning profit from the excise (distillery). He had presented a proposal opposing the excise policy of the government in a resolution of the Bombay Provincial Congress.

Later, the prohibition became a countrywide national movement. In 1888, Congress had passed a resolution and in 1889 the British House of Commons advised the government of India that the sentiments of the people should be kept in mind while finalizing the excise policy.

On March 1, 1890 Government of India issued the notification that provincial governments will keep in mind the sentiments of people while determining their excise policies. But provincial governments were not

ready to lose their revenue simply because the Government in India had passed a resolution. New outlets kept opening and the provincial governments kept taking advantage of excise polices.

In 1908, Tilak launched a movement demanding prohibition and opposed the governments excise policy.

Salt Tax

Bombay Congress had adopted a resolution which dealt with the salt tax. Those days, in Maharashtra there was much discontent against salt tax. In 1889 Tilak published a letter received from a British reader named Rusden opposing salt tax in his *Maratha* newspaper. It contained : “In my opinion, the time has come to say to the government that it is a despicable tax. It is breaking the back of poorest persons. This is a tax which has been imposed on a very essential items. You’ll have to purchase the salt, whatever the cost be, you ask the people to prepare their own salt and not to pay tax.”

“If these people are prosecuted, then collect money for their defence and put it the minds of your 100 million people that they should raise there voices all around so that the rulers of India have to listen to their grievances.”

This letter had made the Government of India restless. In fact, this letter was the precursor of Gandhiji’s salt satyagraha agitation.

Akkalkote Corruption Case

This was the time when Akkalkote corruption case came up. At that time the revenue commissioner of the Central division of the Greater Bombay province was one Mr. Crawford. He use to appoint mamlatdars (revenue officers). Those days British officers used to oblige local Indians by appointing them for petty jobs. Mr. Crawford used to accept bribes for these appointments through his assistant Hanumant Rao and everyone was aware about it. In 1889 a case was filed against Hanumant Rao.

Hanumant Rao conceded that he used to collect money for Mr. Crawford.

Tilak began exposing Crawford through his newspapers. He demanded that mamlatdars and deputy collector should depose in the court on the condition that their jobs will not get affected. Because of evidence of mamlatdars, the crime of Hanumant Rao was proved. The sessions judge rejected his appeal. Crawford case was handed over to a commission of three judges, by the government.

During that time, Bombay government investigated the case of corruption against Crawford. This is known as 'Akkalkote corruption case'. Akkalkote was a princely state in the district of Solapur. Its area was about 350 sq km and population was about 58 thousand. Its ruler was underage. In 1886, the manager of Akkalkote, Vitthal Tilkaji met Hanumant Rao in Pune. Crawford also went to Akkalkote to see the king. There, Crawford demanded a sum of Rs 20,000 from the king for helping him to acquire the authority to rule over his people. Crawford got 4000 rupees instantly and remaining amount was later paid to him by the queen by mortgaging her ornaments. Just after two weeks, the collector of Solapur recommended that some powers may be delegated to the king of Akkalkote.

In the prolonged trial Crawford was exonerated from the charges of corruption. The amount of bribes he took, was considered as a loan to the British government. But the government dealt severely with those mamlatdars who gave evidences.

Despite being exonerated Crawford was dismissed from service. Tilak in his columns in 'Kesari' and 'Maratha' wrote in favour of mamlatdars. He wrote articles in 'Maratha' in favour of the mamlatdars who lost their jobs, on September 1, 1889 in a public meeting he openly charged the unjust government for breaking its promise. He said, "The government which is ruling now, does not want to fulfill its promise, what is the use of such a government?"

Mamlatdars received peoples' support and fighting for their cause Tilak gave a new direction to the society.

The dismissal of mamlatdars was revoked. They were very happy. They expressed their goodwill and were grateful towards Tilak. Mamalatdars presented him a silver watch and a shawl. Tilak wore this watch in his wrist, till the end.

In December 1889, the trinity of Bal, Lal and Pal (Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal) were present during the Bombay session of the Congress. This was the first time that Tilak moved a proposal which was seconded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Arms Act : Tilak's suggestion

In the Nagpur session of Congress in 1891, Tilak had proposed a resolution with regard to the Arms Act. Under this law, no Indian could possess even a small arm. Dagger, stick (lathi), Chopper etc. had become



an essential element of our social and religious rituals. The government had imposed restrictions even on them. This was Tilak's first major political speech.

Raising the issue of increase in the military budget he had said, “ I do not want that my brethren should die of hunger and after 25 years, Russia should dare invade us. We want that military expenditure may be slashed drastically. But we do not want to weaken the government. Rather we want to make it stronger, so that it is ready to face any attack, whether it is from Russia or any other country. Hence, we want that the government should let the public share the responsibility of defence of the country. Government should give as a chance to be able to defend our households and country. In order to revive the spirit of bravery, which still exists, we demand that we should be given arms and we should also be trained to use them.” Tilak demanded from the British government to open a military academy to impart military education to Indians. The resolution was unanimously adopted and Tilak's speech had made a great impact.

Father of Indian unrest

Tilak was a visionary. Only one thing used to bring glitter in his eyes, and that was the freedom of the country. From the beginning of 1893, Tilak had come to the conclusion that we have not to confine ourselves to the educated class and Congress had to reach out to the poor and the illiterate. British historians till then regarded Tilak as the father of Indian unrest. But Tilak was the engine of country's progress in the Congress and also in his public life. He used to tell his countrymen, that their shoulders are laden with the yoke of foreign rule. You must fight for your political rights.



Ganapati and Shivaji Festivals

Ganapati Utsav

Earlier Hindus and Muslims used to celebrate Moharram together, in Bombay. Hindus used to participate with Muslims with great enthusiasm. To bury the taziyas of martyrs of Karbala, Hindus and Muslims took out processions shoulder to shoulder. The Britishers could not digest this bonhomie between the two communities. The British rulers were keenly watching this religious goodwill. Due to policy of divide and rule, communal riots broke out in Bombay in 1893.

The riot which had engulfed Bombay also spread to Pune. Tilak knew that it was useless to expect any protection from the government. Hence he began inculcating the spirit of self-defence and self-confidence among the superstitious Hindus. He started organizing the weaker sections to make them stronger. Later he began organizing Ganapati festivals in public.

The tenth day of Ganapati festival is celebrated as Anant Chaturdashi. Ganapati procession is taken out everywhere. On this day the idols of Lord Ganesh are immersed in water.

Tilak in his *Kesari*, compared worship of Ganesh with the old Olympian festivals of Greece. He organized the collective (mass) worship of the Ganapati festival. As the popularity of Ganapati mahotsav (grand festival) gathered momentum, the British rulers got panicky.

The name of Ganapati became the basis of national movement. Ganapati had annihilated Gajasur (elephant demon). To seek liberation

from the atrocities of Gajasur like Britishers, The people of India unitedly came forward as Ganesha. As many as 72 towns and cities started organizing Ganesh festival publicly. The English newspapers felt politics was involved in the songs and *bhajans* sung for worship of Ganesha. According to them, the Ganapati festivals of Karachi, Madras, Calcutta and Varanasi were developing as new centres of political consciousness. Tilak strengthened the roots of politics with the help of religion. This festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm even when Tilak was in jail.

Shivaji Utsav and Spirit of Valour

Shivaji utsav was launched in 1869. The memorial canopy of Shivaji in Raigad and other related structures were not in a good condition. The descendent chieftains of Shivaji had not paid attention towards that. A



Persian scholar's attention was drawn towards it, V.P.Joshi wrote a poem in 1895 on this memorial. This poem had a magical impact on the people. The books of Ranade and the spirit of national pride of Shivaji had taken strong roots.

Tilak had a deep sense of regard for warriors of the past. He wanted to awaken the people of India from their slumber and make them recollect the pride of these past warriors so that the country could face any enemy with its head held high.

Tilak wrote in *Kesari*-Maharaj Shivaji's memorial lies in Raigad district, which is 16 kms away from Mahad in Kolaba district. In this fort in 1679, Shivaji's coronation was held. After the battle of Jalwa, his body was kept in the same fort. This is the same holy grave. The government cannot be blamed for negligence of this grave. The responsibility of keeping alive the name of Maharaj (Shivaji) lies with the people. Had the descendants of Maharaj who contributed generously in the memorial fund of Lord Harris, would have come forward to renovate the grave of Shivaji how nice it would have been.

For about two months, Tilak travelled around entire Maharashtra explaining his point. He formed a committee of 50 persons. It had an impact on movements of Congress too. Hindus and Muslims both collected funds for Shivaji's anniversary. On the request of Tilak, Congress president Surendra Nath Bannerji spoke on Shivaji's movement before a gathering of 15 thousand people. Within no time a sum of about Rs 15 thousand was collected.

At that time Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya had said that "had Shivaji been born in a English family, his memory would have been immortalized and his anniversary would have been celebrated every year".

As a result of the single minded devotion of Tilak and great enthusiasm of the people, on April 15, 1869, Shivaji's birth anniversary was celebrated on the top of Raigad fort. In the desolated ruins six thousand people

gathered. In the night a torch-light procession was taken out with much fanfare carrying pictures of Shivaji and his guru (teacher) Ramdas.

Tilak was waiting for such an occasion. Like an efficient warrior he was organizing the political movement. He knew quite well that without a social movement, it would not be possible to confront the British government.

In 1908, when Tilak was sentenced to jail, the Bombay government wrote a letter to the minister for India. “The government is of the opinion that the movement led by Tilak is not a religious one.” Tilak also knew it. It was he who was the real founder of ‘Swadeshi Andolan’ (movement).



Famine, Plague and Killing of Rand

Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was aware of the sufferings of the Indian people and their deteriorating condition. In 1895 Congress held its session. This was the time when Bombay province was in severe grip of famine. The land revenue of the farmers was increased from two-fold to four-fold and in some cases it was raised seven times. In the Congress session, Tilak demanded to waive the land tax (revenue) or give relief to the farmers.

Extensive Drought

In 1896, a large area experienced severe drought, large number of people started dying due to hunger and drought. Tilak warned people in his newspapers '*Sarvajanik Sabha*' and '*Kesari*'. Indian newspaper of the time were indifferent towards famine and drought. But Tilak was educating them about their rights. He was propagating his cause by writing in small booklets. Besides he was warning the government too. He wrote in '*Kesari*' if such a famine had gripped England and its Prime Minister was as indifferent as our Viceroy Lord Elgin the government of England would have collapsed in a (single) day." Columns of '*Kesari*' and '*Maratha*' were carrying extensive news of famine and the atrocities of the government.

While in India, hundreds of thousands of people were dying of hunger, in England, preparation were being made to celebrate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. Meanwhile, in India, the government was on alert due to the activities of Tilak.

Sarvajanik Sabha

The Sarvajanik Sabha was established by some prominent citizens of Pune in 1870. The aim was that this Sabha would work as a link with the British government and it explained government's views to the public. Its workers used to serve people during famine, drought or any other such crisis. They also motivated the people in such difficult situations. For quite some time control of this Sabha was in the hands of liberal leaders like Ranade and Gokhale. But gradually the number of Gokhale supporters increased and in 1896, the reins of this Sabha came into the hands of Tilak. Thereafter Gokhale resigned. The British government was already scared of Tilak. When Tilak's followers started distributing



anti government pamphlets during famine, the government announced derecognition of Sarvajanik Sabha on March 17, 1807. The government was so panicky about the activities of *Sarvajanik Sabha*, that they were not allowed to enter the villages, their literature was destroyed and they were also not allowed to hold meetings. *Maratha* responded to it by writing. “The Sabha has neither been established by any government resolution nor it can be dissolved by a government resolution.” At that time, this was deemed to be a very courageous act.

In those days, Congress was dominated by leaders who did not want to openly oppose the government. In the Calcutta Congress of 1906, Tilak wanted to raise the issue of famine and non-payment of land revenue, but the leaders of Congress did not want to displease the government. Expressing his opinion about it, Tilak wrote in *Kesari*, ‘Give political education to the uneducated public and explain to them how legal struggles are fought only then the government will understand that to disregard Congress opinion is to disregard Indian nation’.

Over the years, the slogan Congress adapted, Tilak had given that slogan to his followers then. His slogan was, “If you cannot pay land revenue, don’t pay. “The British writers and the government of India, in their correspondence, termed this slogan as “No-land revenue movement”.

The pro-government dailies and the moderate leaders continued their opposition to Tilak. The *Bombay Gazette* had called Tilak as an ‘insane journalist and notorious revolutionary’ and Tilak’s popularity was on the rise. In 1895, he was elected to *Bombay legislative council* for the first time. Second time also he was elected defeating a senior government officer, who was a moderate candidate and an advocate. He was elected to the senate of *Bombay university* also. Despite being very busy in political and social activities he found time to write a serious book like *Orion*. In this book it was established that *Rigveda* was written 6000 years before Christ.

Outbreak of Plague in Pune

During the same period (in 1897) an epidemic of plague broke out in the state. In the city of Pune also there was not a single locality, which was not affected by plague. One could see dead bodies and burning pyres every where. People had fled from the villages leaving their homes. Tilak was a very energetic and active social worker. He started helping people whole heartedly to arrange eatables etc. for them. He used to collect funds going from door to door and arrange for medicines. With his own resources he started a hospital and a *langar* for free food to every one. When people started dying in thousands due to plague, The British government enacted a law for prevention of plague. Under this law, government could enter anyone's house for search purpose without giving any prior notice. Anybody could be taken to hospital and anyone could be kept in a separate place. Even passengers of railways, steamers etc could be detained. In the name of prevention of plague people were subjected to lot of excesses. People were fed up with the highhandedness of government officials. Tilak raised the problems of people in *Kesari* and opposed the excesses and this annoyed the government.

Killing of Rand and Ayerst

An officer named Rand was responsible for the excesses committed by government officials in the name of prevention of plague. This was the time of Rand's sway over administration. People were very disappointed and frightened. After Shivaji festival, youths were drawn towards physical exercise and military organization. Tilak's articles had instilled the youth with enthusiasm and zeal.

Suddenly, on the night of June 22, two brothers, Damodar and Balkrishna Chafekar shot down two Europeans namely, Rand and Ayerst because they could not tolerate the authoritarian rule of the Britishers.

They wanted to kill Rand but Ayerst was hit first. Thereafter, Rand was targeted immediately. Rand died on the spot while Ayerst died on the way to hospital. Pro-government (British) dailies blamed Tilak for these murders. Anglo-Indian dailies of Bombay were hell bent upon framing Tilak as the culprit. Tilak denied these allegations. Thereafter he went to Bombay to file a case against The Times of India.



First Trial of Treason

Arrest of Tilak

Tilak stayed with his friend Mr. Khare in the night. Khare's house was at Girgaon. Both the friends were having dinner, when all of sudden an European police officer barged in. He showed the arrest warrant to Tilak. The sepoys had surrounded the house from all sides. But Tilak was having a good laugh. There was no sign of worry on his face.

He was taken into custody and sent to a lock up. After an hour had passed when Mr. Khare reached there to meet his friend, he was astonished to see that Tilak was having a sound sleep in the dark cell.

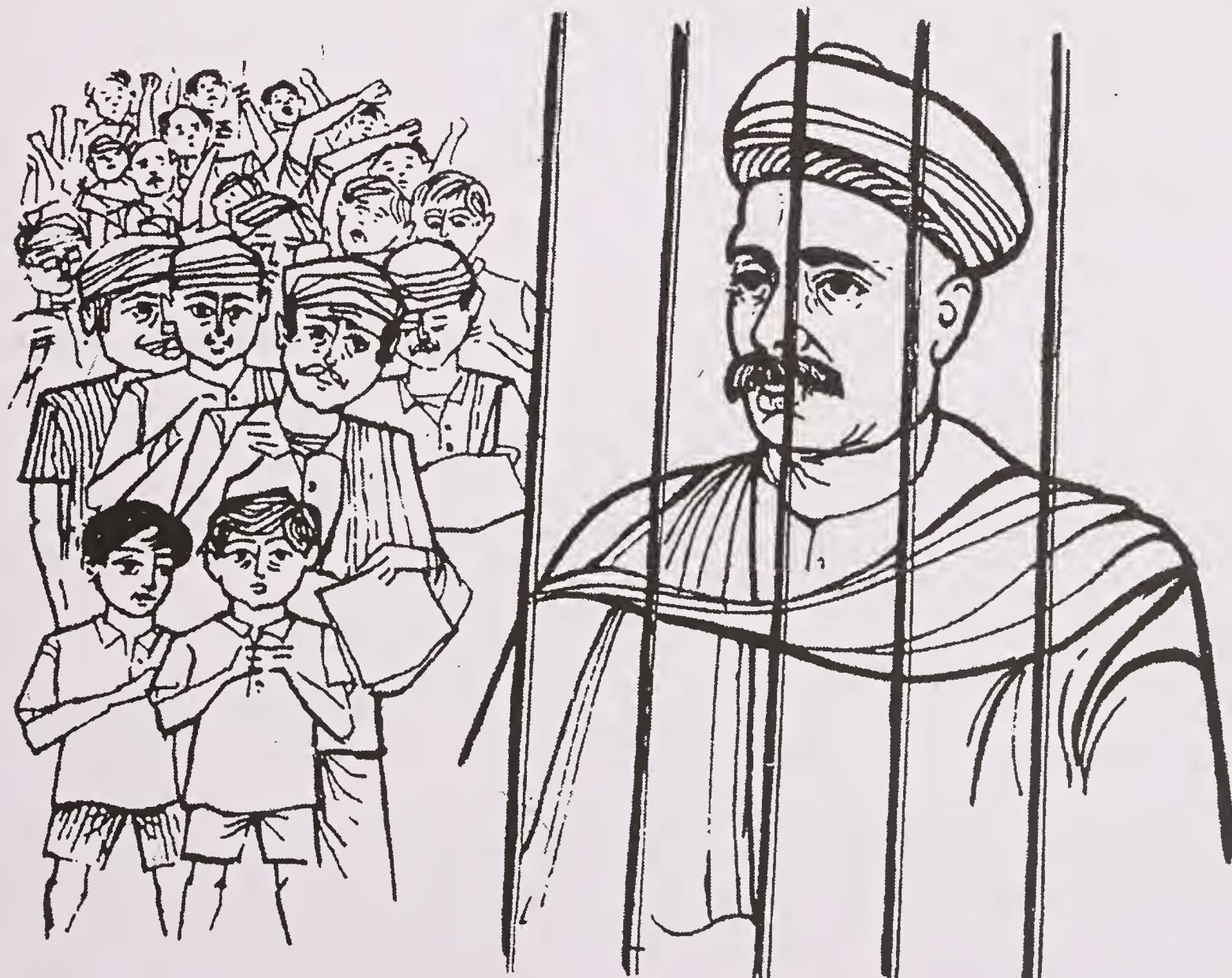
Tilak was charged with sedition. By then the political consciousness had not spread in the country. At that time this was treated as a very serious charge. It so happened that not a single lawyer of Bombay was ready to take his case. To plead his case a barrister from Calcutta was put in the job. To get Tilak released, application for bail was submitted in the court of the chief presidency magistrate three times but everytime it was rejected. For the fourth time bail application was submitted in the court of Justice Badruddin Tyabji. He accepted his application for bail.

Tilak was released on the security of Rs. 50 thousand and two personal sureties of 25 thousand rupees each. The amount of security was deposited by Dwarkadas Dharamsey. For the defence of Tilak funds started pouring in from every quarter and very shortly more than Rs. 50 thousand were collected. On September 8, the trial of Tilak began in Bombay court.

Tilak was arrested under sec 124-A. He was accused of provoking and instigating hatred against the government. For this crime life imprisonment or 'Kaalapani' or three years imprisonment in jail with fine could have been awarded. The British government was hell bent on proving Tilak a traitor because of his articles.

Tilak in an article titled 'Veer Puja' in *Kesari*, had written – "Europeans take pride in the poetries of Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and other poets and never shy away from paying tributes to them, so can we not take pride in the writings of Kalidas, Bhavbhuthi, Moropant, Tukaram and other Sanskrit and Marathi poets."

Tilak in his a statement had said "I say even now, that the articles were not seditious and neither they were written with any intention for treason, nor, these could have generated anything like treason/sedition".



The judge and members of jury were not well versed with Marathi language, even then they pronounced rigorous imprisonment of eighteen months to Tilak. The news of Tilak's sentence was like bolt. It led to great turmoil and commotion everywhere. The Dussehra festival of Bombay lost its charm. No procession was taken out. Even Diwali was not celebrated in grief. The president of 1897 Congress, described it as a 'murder of justice'.

The employees of *Kesari* and *Maratha* appealed for donation to defend Tilak fund. People donated very generously. Surendra Nath Banerjee, Shishu Kumar Ghosh and others were collecting funds in Calcutta within a very short-span of time, an amount of Rs 53 thousand were collected under this fund.

Tilak was in jail and people were agitating for his release. Telegrams were sent to India Secretary, Viceroy and the Governor of Bombay for releasing him and Chimanlal Setalvad also met the governor but he remained adamant.

Dongri Jail

Initially Tilak was confined in Dongri jail. In the jail he was treated like any other ordinary prisoner. He was made to do hard labour in the jail like making ropes. He was given substandard food to the extent that he had to eat his bread (roti) after dipping in water. In two months he lost about 25 pounds in weight. Hearing about Tilak's indisposition people got worried. The government was being condemned in the newspapers. The government got panicky and sent him to Byculla jail. In Byculla jail his health deteriorated further and he became diabetic. After sometime when plague spread to Bombay, Tilak was sent to Yervada jail.

Tilak was taken to Yervada jail in Bombay in a closed compartment. At Kalyan station doctors came for a health check up because of plague epidemic in the area. The door of closed compartment was opened and people who were waiting at the station got a glimpse of their beloved

leader. The news spread like wild fire. Seeing a frail Tilak in the prisoner's robe people were shocked.

By now, Tilak due to his scholarship had earned respect from the Sanskrit scholars of Europe. People in Europe had already read his Book 'Orion'. Renowned German Sanskrit scholar Max Mueller demanded the release of Tilak in January 1898. He had sent a copy of his treatise of Rigveda to Tilak in the jail.

Alongwith Maxmueller, Sir William Hunter, Ramesh Chandra Dutt, Dadabhai Naoroji, William Kane, Serge, Richard Garth etc. jointly met India Secretary and demanded Tilak's release.

The Government had to bend down and release Tilak because of agitations and appeals. Six months prior to completion of his sentence Tilak was released. On 6th september 1898 at nine in the night, Tilak was set free from the jail. At the time of his release Tilak looked like a skeleton. Next day whoever heard this news reached to garland him. More than 10 thousand people flocked to catch a glimpse of him. Ramesh Chandra Dutt wrote in his congratulatory letter. "The nation will win because of your sufferings."

Response to Challenge

Tilak's health had deteriorated and on the advice of friends he went to Singhagarh. There he purchased some land and built a hut on it. His health began to improve. But he was not a yogi who would live in isolation. The Madras Congress session was being held and he left to attend the session. At every station en route he was given a grand reception. He deliberately did not speak at all in the session.

From Madras, he went to Madurai, After having a glimpse of goddess Meenakshi he went to Rameshwaram on bullock cart. From there he went to Srilanka and then came back to Pune.

Some people had began terming his silence as an aberration. Rumours spread that Tilak has made some compromise with the government.

In February, Tilak returned from his journey as a tired man. On July 4, he in *Kesari*, assured the Naram Dal of his support. In February Vasudev shot down those who had given clue to the government in the Rand murder case.

In the 'Globe' and 'Times of India' newspapers, there were rumours that Vasudev had the backing of Tilak. Tilak filed a case of defamation against the 'Times of India'. The paper apologized as trial began. Tilak filed a case also against England's Daily Globe and it too had to apologize.

During those days, Lord Sandhurst was the governor of Bombay. During his tenure the people of Bombay had to suffer because of famine and a severe plague epidemic had just broken out at that time, Congress session was held in Lucknow. Ramesh Chandra Dutt was the President of the session. He was greatly disturbed by the exploitation of people by the Britishers and growing poverty in the country. From the platform of the session he openly criticized the atrocities under Bombay governor Sandhurst's administration. The members of Naram Dal opposed this proposal. The members threatened to leave the discussion mid-way. The opponents were reluctant even to listen to Tilak's objections, because members of naramdal were not in favour of openly condemning the Britishers.

After some time, at Satara, in Bombay provincial Conference, Tilak again raised the same question. This time his proposal was a bit soft. But the chairman of the conference, Gokuldas Kahandas Parekh was not at all ready to listen to any criticism of the government. He was raising some legal hurdles. At last a proposal was evolved with consensus.

By then, Congress used to present proposals for statutory reforms to the government. In *Kesari* Tilak criticized Congress for being soft.

He warned, “Congress and the conference are not for those sycophants who build memorials of each governor, rather it is for those people who don’t hesitate to present people’s opinion in a bold but disciplined way.” Thus, he wanted to make Congress a people’s organization. The hesitation of these leaders was drawing them away from the people. They were not ready to agitate like Tilak. The Britishers were proud of their white race and the Congress had no courage to face their atrocities. People everywhere were angry and disturbed because, their leaders were afraid of presenting peoples voice to the rulers. In such a situation Tilak moved forward to take the reins of politics in his own hands.

People’s Lokmanya

A fire was raging in the heart of Tilak. He was all set to seek political freedom and the youth of country were with him. During those days a terrible political restlessness had spread all around. Government’s repression was going on. According to India Secretary Lord Hamilton, “Britishers in India were sitting over a heap of gun powder”. Government was keeping a strict vigil on Tilak. Police was following him all the time.

How Tilak became popular among youth, was witnessed in Delhi Congress of 1900, when he was felicitated by the students in the public meeting and presented a welcome address. The next session of Congress was held in Calcutta. Tilak had a lengthy discussion on the deeds of the ruling class. When he stood up to speak in support of a resolution public gave him a standing ovation.

After returning from Calcutta he went to Nagpur. At every station a large crowd used to welcome him. When Tilak alighted from train at Nagpur Station, flowers and gulal (dry colours) were showered on him. The students drew his chariot (cart) for quite a distance. They had removed the horses from the chariot. The procession moved forward. bands were playing. From the rooftops people were showering flowers on Tilak.

He was presented a “maan patra” in the public meetings by the students. He spoke on Gita in the packed hall. The boys asked him, “please show us the path” And, thus, Tilak became Lokmanya’. The title of Lokmanya was the biggest award for his services, bestowed on him by the public.

Tai Maharaj’s Trouble

Along with success, Tilak was also getting involved in troubles. He had a friend named Baba Maharaj who was a big landlord from the south. He had two daughters and both were married. In 1897, at the time of demise of Baba Maharaj, his second wife, who was known as ‘Tai Maharaj’, was pregnant. After the death of her husband she gave birth to a son. The son of ‘Tai Maharaj’ died after surviving for two months. Baba Maharaj had got willed his property and estate while he was bed-ridden due to illness. In his will he had authorized four trustees to look after his estate. Tilak was one of these trustees. In the will, Baba wrote that, “if my wife gives birth to a girl (daughter), the trustees should arrange adoption of a son for my widow.”

Tai Maharaj was inflicted of tuberculosis and the trustees wanted to adopt a son during her life time. The affairs of the estate was being looked after by one Nagpurkar, who was also a trustee. The estate was not managed properly and it had huge debt. Tai Maharaj was under his influence. He was in favour of adopting an adult person, while other three trustee were in favoure of a boy named Jagannath of Aurangabad. Heeding to the advice of these three trustees Jagannath of Aurangabad was adopted as the son. This matter was duly brought to the notice of the agent of the state and the District Magistrate of Pune.

After returning to Pune, Nagpurkar and some others coaxed Tai Maharaj and due to their pressure, Tai Maharaj started saying’ that she was pressurized to adopt and she filed a complaint the with District Magistrate Aston.

Tilak was charged of misappropriation and forgery in the accounts and also forcible confinement of Tai Maharaj. The government got chance to settle scores with Tilak. Aston announced an imprisonment for one and half years and a fine of Rs. 1000 on Tilak. Tilak was arrested and was sent to Yervada jail immediately. He was not even given time to appeal. Later on, he was released on bail. On Tilak's appeal, the sessions judge had reduced the imprisonment to six months. But, ultimately Privy Council and the High Court rejected all charges against Tilak and he was given a clean chit in this case. The case went on for 15 years. He had to spend fifty thousand rupees on this case. Thus, Tilak had to go through a lot of trouble due to this litigation.

New Track of Innovation and Knowledge

Outwardly Tilak was a plain and simple man but from inside he was very bold and fearless. There used to flow a cool current of knowledge deep inside his heart. With his first book *Orion* he had impressed the scholars by his learning and scholarly bent of mind. In the one and half years of his imprisonment he had made a deep study of Rigveda, sent by Max Mueller.

The book *Orion* was published in 1893. During these five years Tilak was busy collecting material for this subject in Calcutta, Madras and Lahore. Meanwhile, he kept trying to acquaint himself with the new discoveries in geology, archaeology and folklores.

Tilak had a definite opinion about the age of Vedas. He considered them to be written four to five thousand years before Christ. Many a scholars agree to this discovery by him.

In 1903, his book 'The Artic Home In the Vedas' was published. There were about four hundred fifty pages in this book. Quoting from the Vedas and citing instances from Taittiriya Samhita and astrology he established that many years ago Aryans lived in the North Pole. At that time this land was full of greenery and it was not snow clad.

Due to sudden massive changes in the climate, the Aryan race had to abandon North Pole and they moved towards Asia and Europe in south. This book by Tilak was appreciated by scholars.



Division of Bengal and National Awakening

Division of Bengal, Self-Reliance and Boycott Movement

This was the time of great turmoil in the life of Tilak. Due to the Tai Maharaj case he was upset for a while. But his personal problems could not deter him from his ideals. Leaving his personal problems behind, he engaged himself in the cause of the nation with renewed vigour.

The Britishers had conspired afresh to crush the political consciousness in the country. This is described as the declaration of division of Bengal, popularly known as 'Bang Bhang'. With this they wanted to create a rift in the country and particularly in Bengal. Muslims were more in numbers in East Bengal. The Britishers wanted to incite them. In 1904, Lord Curzon said in a speech – "with the division of Bengal, Muslims of east Bengal shall get the feeling of that unity which they never felt after the Muslim emperors." On July 20, 1905, the division of Bengal was formally announced.

But the entire country was up against this step of the Britishers and because of this, a movement for use of swadeshi goods and boycott of foreign goods got momentum.

Tilak passionately engaged himself in the cause of use of swadeshi goods and boycott of foreign goods in Maharashtra and Bengal.

The way Tilak had raised the issue of national interest was hailed and welcomed by the entire nation with an open heart. In Banaras, Gokhale while making a speech had termed it 'National Wave.'

In the Banaras session of Congress (1905), Gokhale in his presidential address had said, "Because of the division, the tide which has engulfed

the sentiments of people of Bengal will always be remembered in the annals of our national progress. Since the beginning of the British rule, this is the first incident in which all the sections of Indian Society forgetting their caste and creed, without any external pressure, inspired by a single emotion, have risen against the injustice which has been done against all. Bengal has been swept by the wave of national consciousness.”

During those days, because of the trade policy of Britain, domestic industries of India were being destroyed. The big industrialists of Britain were manipulating to ruin Indian economy for their own benefit and profit.

In August 1905, Tilak wrote in *Kesari*- “It appears that our people have failed to fully understand the significance of the boycott movement started by people of Bengal. When a tough fight is going on between the people and its alien rulers, such a strong action becomes absolutely very necessary. There is an instance even in the history of England which is worth mentioning – how the people came forward to condemn their own king when their demands were not met-we neither have power, nor the will to raise arms against them. But why should not we attempt to stop the flow of crores of rupees to outside foreign country? Don’t we see, how the eyes of the American government opened by the boycott of their goods by the Chinese people. History is the witness that with the unity, courage and determination even a slave nation can rein in insolvent rulers, without using any weapon. Therefore, we are confident that the people in other parts of country also will not lag behind in supporting Bengal in the current crisis.”

Tilak became busy in preparing the country well for “Swadeshi” (made in India) and swavlamban’ (self-reliance). He was in favour of a vigorous movement and strict discipline. To make the country self-reliant, he started inspiring indigenous traders to make goods locally. By his articles, he started encouraging people to be self-dependent. For education in the field of agriculture and industry he began collecting donations from the public.

In 1903, he started a fund, paisa-kosh for the development of domestic business. He wanted to invest the money from this fund in the development of indigenous enterprises. To organize this fund he had sought the cooperation of his countrymen at every step.

This was the time of Japan's growing influence in world politics. In our swadeshi movement too, songs appreciating Japan were being sung. Due to Tilak's influence Bengal also started celebrating Shivaji festival. In 1906, Tilak was invited to this festival and Calcutta gave a grand reception to Tilak. Tilak opposed the division of Bengal (Bang bhang) in a public meeting at Calcutta. Lokmanya assured Bengal on behalf of whole of India, "Don't stop opposing this division, the entire country is with you."

Tilak made a whirlwind tour of India in 1906. With regard to this he claimed, "We are not armed, and we don't need any arms. We have a more potential weapon and that is the "political weapon" of boycott."

Tilak was not in favour of educating youngmen to become like Englishmen. He wanted to make India a strong self reliant country by igniting the boycott movement in every field.

Due to the boycott and swadeshi movements, Tilak became very popular among the people of India. Even a child knew his name. He had become the most popular leader of the country. Hence, the youth wing of the Congress wanted that Tilak should preside the Calcutta session of Congress. The Editor of *Vande Matram*, Aurobindo Ghosh formally proposed the name of Tilak. Some provincial committies of Congress also supported his name. As a result people in Naram Dal panicked thinking that the leadership of congress might slip away from the hands of Congress. Therefore, Naram Dal proposed the name of veteran, Dadabhai Naoroji. There was no question of opposing Dadabhai Naoroji. He was elected the president of the Calcutta Congress.

Calcutta Session And Swarajya (Home Rule)

Tilak dominated even the Calcutta Congress also. It was in the Calcutta Congress that Tilak first used the term 'Swarajya'. Resolutions were adopted in favour of indigenous national education along with the boycott of foreign rule and industry.

Tilak in his address, explained the principle of "peaceful resistance." Bipin Chandra Pal presented the proposal regarding boycott. Despite the uneasiness of Naram Dal, proposals of Tilak's Garam Dal were accepted in Calcutta Congress.



National Education, National Language

The Britishers with their education system were producing mental slaves in the country. Tilak considered this kind of education as an anti-national effort. As against this rotten education', he was in favour of 'Indian National Education'. He was also in favour of imparting primary education in vernacular language till the age of 8 years, in national schools. He very well knew that only by getting formal education, our youth cannot be successful in their career. He said, except India, nowhere in the world there is no such compulsion to learn a foreign language.

He was not in favour of compulsory education of English prevailing at that time. Speaking in a conference at Kashi Nagri Pracharimi Sabha, in December 1905, Tilak suggested that 'Devnagari' should be considered national script just like national language Hindi.

Emphasizing on the need of a national script he had said " One script is an integral part of a national movement. We should have only one language for entire India. If a nation has to be united, there is no bigger power than a national language".

He considered national education mandatory for the evolution of national character. He wanted to make India a free united nation only by a national education system.

Surat Session

The entire country had accepted Tilak's boycott policy as a 'political weapon. 'Inspite of opponents' annoyance, Tilak reiterated the resolution of political progress and boycott of foreign goods in the Surat session of Congress in 1907.

Thus Boycott movement had spread far and wide. It had taken a large shape in the country. In Calcutta session, Tilak's Garam Dal policy had got a majority support. Now, in Surat, leaders of Naram Dal were trying to convert their earlier defeat into a win. Tilak suggested the name

of Lal Lajpat Rai for the post of president. But the Naram Dal wanted its own candidate for this post. They proposed the name of Dr. Rash Bihari Ghosh. The reception committee of the Surat Session was under the control of Naram Dal. Dr. Ghosh's name was proposed in the session. Tilak was not allowed to speak. Meanwhile, Dr. Ghosh sat on the president's chair and then Tilak came on the stage so that he could appeal to the delegates. But the chair (president) asked him to sit. Tilak refused to do so. Due to this, the volunteers of Naram Dal came on stage, so that they could persuade Tilak to sit. But Gokhale stopped them and Tilak stood quietly there with hands folded. Naram Dal delegates were repeatedly asking him to sit down. They wanted to remove Tilak from the stage and uproar was increasing. On the stage Surendra Nath Banerjee and Dhirajshah Mehta were also seated. Someone threw a shoe on the stage which hit Mehta. People ran helter-skelter. Naram Dal people ran towards Tilak with chairs in hands. Ultimately police intervened and peace prevailed in the stage.

This was an interesting event of the twenty-third session of the Congress. Tilak continued his efforts towards his goal of swarajya (home rule), swadeshi (home-made goods), boycott and national education. Even in this phase of compromises and differences, Tilak remained firm. In *Kesari* he published an appeal addressing the Naram Dal.

“All Indians have only one goal. So, it would be a mistake to think that due to difference of opinions among them, they will not mutually cooperate with each other. In British parliament, there are radical socialists and democrats. Their opinions differ with each other. Even then when there comes a question of nations common interest, they unite forgetting their differences, seeing all this with our eyes, how can we say that a person belonging to only one ideology should be given pride of place in National Congress? Does it not manifest that it lacks liberal sentiments? This is the duty of our politicians of different ideologies to march towards our common goal. Whatever be the differences in our ideals Naram Dal and Garam Dal, both should work for the Congress.”

Tilak became an overwhelming obsession all over the country. His fiery speeches inspired and motivated people. He said – “The Britishers have been ruling over India for more than 90 years. We have gathered here to discuss how much our condition has changed since then. We find that inspite of improving our condition it has deteriorated further. There is so much of poverty everywhere. What is the reason of this? Earlier our rulers were either Hindu or Muslim. Both were concerned about the welfare of their subjects. If the ruler has no concern for the subjects, how can he be called Lord? It’s okay, that the people should not revolt against the king but how far it is justified that the king should betray his own subjects? The king who does so, deviates from the path of his duty.”

Swarajya is My Birth Right

After the Surat episode, Tilak became so busy that he had no time to relax. On the occasion of Shivaji festival he said – “If Shivaji could establish ‘Swarajya’ two centuries ago we too can achieve swarajya one day for sure.”

Now, wherever Tilak spoke, he used to say that “Swarajya is my birth right and I shall have it.”

Prohibition Movement

Despite being peaceful the Disobedience movement against the government was gaining momentum. Its other face was prohibition movement. In this movement, Tilak opposed the prohibition policy of the government. He knew that the government will not issue any directive for prohibition. According to its old hackneyed style government readied itself for committing atrocities.

In Lonavala near Pune the District Magistrate imposed prohibitory order under sec. 144 of 1.P.C and ordered that there should not be a crowd near any country liquor shop nor they should stop anyone entering

a shop. Even after administrative strictness volunteers continued their agitation by sitting in front of wine shops. Groups of about 40 to 50 people collected opposite such shops.

Groups of 40-50 people used to collect opposite such shops and raise their voice against liquor. Their speeches had a deep impact on the government and people alike. Once, the police attacked suddenly on unarmed volunteers. These arrests, naturally had made an impact on the people. People everywhere were agitated.

The movement of civil disobedience against the government was having a good impact in the country. For the first time, Naram and Garam Dals, social reformers and orthodox all came together on one platform on a socio-political issue. Dr. Bhandarkar was the president of this meeting. On April 23, 1908, a delegation comprising among others, Tilak and Bhandarkar, agreed to postpone its agitation in order to pacify the atmosphere.



Historical Trial of 1908

The date of July 6 was fixed for a meeting with the Governor. The government was looking at the lull as a sign of ensuing storm. On June 24, 1908. Tilak was arrested. When the delegation met the governor without Tilak, he bluntly replied “by sitting in Dharna the liberty is compromised”.

Arrest of Tilak

At this time Tilak was arrested for his article in *Kesari*, entitled ‘Desh ka Durbhagya’ (Misfortune of the Country). After this, one more article was added into the list of allegations. It was alleged that he was supporting the bomb explosion cases of Bengal in his articles. But, in reality, he was arrested because of his fierce patriotism and his growing influence in the country. Tilak himself pleaded his case and his arguments lasted upto 21 hours. This explanation of his was a clarion call for the patriots and freedom fighters. He first, explained that the articles for which he is being tried have been wrongly translated into English. When Tilak started cross-examining the prosecution witness, he fumbled several times. Then he told that finding fault with the government or to demand for reforms in the governance is not sedition. To fight for peoples’ freedom and change of government is the right of every citizen. Those days English (owned by Britishers) newspapers were at liberty to write anything but this liberty was not available to papers owned by Indians. Tilak said that, “in my articles, I just wanted to oppose the false propaganda of British owned dailies.” He reminded European members that even in England, the newspapers got freedom of expression only after a prolonged struggle.

“I want that in India also, you support this cause.”

But the government had already made its mind to punish Tilak. Generally, the courts adjourned in the evening. But on the day of July 22, 1908 court sat till late at night. At twenty minutes past nine at night, the Indian members of jury found Tilak innocent, while the British jury members found him guilty as it had happened in 1897. Before delivering his judgement, the judge asked Tilak if he wanted to say anything, he could speak. What Tilak said on that occasion, still echoes in our ears. He said, “Despite the jury’s verdict, I state that I am innocent. There are powers bigger than us, on whose wishes, the man and his world moves. May be the god desires that the work I want to do can be accomplished through sufferings than my remaining free.”



The judge in two out of three charges sentenced him for three years imprisonment each in Andaman Islands. He had to undergo this punishment in continuation. Thus he was sentenced for six years confinement in Andaman Islands. On the third charge, he was fined one thousand rupees.

Tilak as usual was calm, quiet and serious. The judge left his seat at 10 p.m. This was the dark night of July 22. It was raining heavily. Inspite of this thousands of people had gathered outside the court to have a glimpse of their beloved leader. Police took him to the railway station from the backdoor in a closed vehicle. From there, he was taken to Ahmedabad in a special train. Public could not have a glimpse of Tilak.

The real reason for giving such a harsh punishment to Tilak in this hurried manner, was due to his articles and awareness was being created in the country very rapidly. The British government felt that this could shake its rule. The then government of Bombay wrote a letter to England based India Minister giving details of the activities of Tilak. He wrote 'he is one of the main conspirators in India opposing British government, rather he is the prime conspirator. The Ganapati festival celebration, fund trust and national school etc run by him, have only one goal. This goal is to throw out the British rule."



Mandalay Jail and ‘Gita Rahasya’

Tilak's arrest infuriated the entire country. He was sentenced to imprisonment for six years. This time, despite government's tremendous suppression Bombay went on total strike for six days. Protest meetings were held at various places. Newspapers belonging to India and abroad, also condemned the punishment given to Tilak – confinement in Andaman Islands (Kala Pani) and because of these countrywide protest, Tilak's sentence of rigorous imprisonment was converted into simple imprisonment. He was not subjected to rigorous labour. Besides, he was served desired food and also permitted to have homemade food.

On September 13, 1908, Tilak was sent to Mandalay (Burma-now Myanmar) jail from Sabarmati jail. In Mandalay his cell measured ‘20x12’ feet.

Daily Routine of Tilak

In Mandalay, Tilak had to spend his time in isolation. The people who visited him, included cooks sent from India, jailor, doctor, inspector of jail and occasionally the welfare officer of the jail also came to see him. He was not allowed to read any newspaper, magazine or a current affairs book. He could write only one letter in a month and could get only one letter from outside also. He could meet only one person in three months. Tilak did not use much of these facilities.

Tilak led a very regulated life in Mandalay. He used to wake up very early in the morning and worshipped for an hour. After that he took bath and then tea etc. Except in winters he always took cold-water bath. Then he used to sit for reading and writing. At noon he used to take lunch. His



meal consisted of wheat bread, milk, ghee, lassi, dal (lentils) and fruits. From Pune, sometimes, he used to get pickles, chutney and mangoes also. At one thirty at noon he used to take water with lemon. After lunch he used to sit again for writing and reading and used to have dinner at five in the evening. At six his cell used to be shut. He was diabetic and when he passed more sugar in urine, he used to take 'Puris' made of barley, milk and lassi instead of normal meal and also stop taking sugar in tea-coffee. But he never took medicines.

As compared to his food his cook Kulkarni used to get very poor quality food. Tilak used to share his food with him. Though kulkarni hesitated to share food with him, but Tilak insisted . Once Kulkarni forgot to put salt in his daal. Tilak did not say anything and ate the 'Daal'. When the cook sat to take his meal then he found that there was no salt in 'daal'. The poor man went to him and asked for apology. Tilak said the fact is that I never felt that the 'Daal is tasteless. Thus there is no question of you asking for apology.

Whatever the food was left over after his lunch etc, he used to feed the birds as a result the birds became very friendly with him. They used to come and sit over his shoulders when he sat down for eating, and they would take position on his writing table. They used to chirp in his cell throughout the day. Once, the Superintendent of jail visited his cell and was surprised to see the flock of birds there. He asked, aren't the birds afraid of you? Tilak said, " This much I don't know. But neither I eat them nor I frighten them. In fact I don't feel hatred or fear even for a creature like python". Hearing these words from Tilak the superintendent quietly went away from there.

Though Tilak had to spend a solitary life in the jail, he fully utilized his time. While in jail, he studied so much that when he returned to India from



Mandalay, he had around 500 books with him and from home he usually asked for books only. He studied religious books on Christianity, Buddhism and Islam besides Sanskrit scriptures.

He read the works of western thinkers and scholars like Kant, Hegel, Butler, Locke, Darwin, Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire and Max Mueller.

While in jail, Tilak learnt Pali, French and German language. He had acquired so much knowledge of German language that he used to read the books written by Weber in original German language. Once a British Governor of Burma visited the jail, he met Tilak also. Tilak told him that he was learning German language. The governor was very much pleased to hear this and asked him whether he would like to test his daughter’s knowledge of German language to which Tilak readily agreed. Next day Governor’s daughter went to him. Tilak took his test and told the Governor that her knowledge of German language is incomplete. Tilak’s behavior had a good impact on the jail authorities and they started giving him more respect than earlier.

Gita Rahasya

While undergoing his sentence in jail, Tilak wrote *Geeta Rahasya* – an immortal classic in Marathi. Though he hardly took four to six months to write but its preparation consumed much more time.

Gita Rahasya is the solution to questions buried in his mind. Even in childhood, he used to search answers to his questions by reading *Gita*. *Gita Rahasya* is a commentary on the way of life based on deeds and actions. He writes, “Gita motivates to work. The deed should not be done for any greed, rather it should be done without any expectation and in the spirit of duty.” In short, *Gita Rahasya* is a treasury of Indian philosophy and it also deals with the western knowledge and thoughts. The book reveals his profound wisdom and knowledge.

His experiment of Gita about doing one’s duty had great impact on India. He considered it necessary to do Karma (duty) for some noble purpose in life. His only goal was ‘Swadesh and Swarajya’.

Gita Rahasya had made a good impact on the country and motivated the country’s politics towards ‘Swarajya’. Tilak told people, that God never helps the man who is an idle and shifts his responsibility on others.

Tilak's aim was people of India should think well and do their duty. By doing duty only they can experience attainment. When there is no pain there is no gain.

While returning from Mandalay he was not allowed to carry the manuscript of *Gita Rahasya* with him. It was handed over to him later. The book was published in June 1915.

Commitment to Principles

After spending nearly an year in Mandalay he received a letter from his friend Khaparde in which it was indicated that he could be freed if he promised not to indulge in political activities. The reply which Tilak gave reveals what a principled and patient man he was. He wrote – “I don’t wish to be honoured and don’t want to show off. But once I am freed, I should have the same liberty and freedom to work, as any other citizen of the country, under the law. This liberty was made available to me under the conditions settled in 1898, which I had accepted. But I don’t think that those conditions could again be imposed upon me. I have almost suffered for one year of my sentence and after five years, at least I hope so, I will be among you all, as a free citizen.”

“I am 53 now, and I don’t hope to live beyond ten years more. Out of this, I will have five years for doing public work. But if I accept any such condition as your suggest, I will spend even these five years as a dead man. I don’t like such a life. It is true that my scope of work is not limited to politics only, and even after restrictions on political work I can do literary work. But I have given much thought to this question and come to the conclusion that it will be a contradiction to my earlier life. You very well know, that I have never taken care of me or my family. I have been always trying to do my duty towards people of my country. Now if I withdraw from public life, for personal comforts of five years, what kind of impact it will have on people.”

"By these words, you might get an idea that I may accept restrictions on my public activities, but I will like to remain inside the jail instead of living an passive life outside the jail.

There is another incident which shows Tilak's capacity to endure sufferings. In June 1912, Tilak's wife passed away. Tilak's nephew Ghodopant informed him of this sad news in a telegram. One June 8, 1912 Tilak wrote to him, - "I have been deeply shocked by your telegram. I am habitual of accepting my fate peacefully, but this incident has shaken me. The deepest distress is that I could not be with her at her last moment. But fate was inevitable. A chapter of my life has ended and much time is not left in the next (second) phase. The responsibility of my sons is now on you. They should remember that I was younger than them when I became an orphan. You have to see that they should not waste their time in useless grief. One should face the fate with courage."

In 1925, Subhash Chandra Bose also spent his sentence in the same jail. Later he wrote – "I often used to think, how Lokmanya Tilak could keep himself busy in intellectual work, in these circumstances for over five years. Whosoever has complete self control over him and who is away from grief and joy, detached and indifferent to emotions, only that person can rise high in such a filthy place. In such a terrible place Lokmanya was all alone. Even the ordinary prisoners of the jail were not allowed to meet Tilak."

Tilak was denied even the smallest liberty. He could not keep more than two books with him at a time (later on he was allowed to keep more books). His correspondence was being censored. When he used to meet his relatives and friends, jail officials used to be present there. The conversation was monitored and he was interrupted occasionally. An emotional person like him must have been deeply affected by this

In this regard, I recollect one incident. Some government officers came to see Tilak in Jail and said, "Tilak, how are you?" Tilak got annoyed for not addressing as Mr. or Shri. before his name and he rebuked the

officer severely. The officer initially was stunned and then went away from there apologizing. Tilak was fond of gardening. Even today the trees are standing tall, where Tilak had planted them”

“I still wonder how Tilak could write a unique classic like *Gita Rahasya* while living there”.

On June 8, 1914, preparations had started to send Tilak from Mandalay to Pune. In the midnight for 16th June, two police officers took him to his house in Pune. Thus he completed his sentence of six years. On 20th June, a meeting was held in honour of Tilak. After his release from Mandalay Tilak first expressed his views in a public meeting. He said, “ seeing people gathered here in such a large numbers, I can understand that people have not forgotten me. I too have not forgotten them. My behavior with you, will be the same, as it was earlier.”

People used to call Tilak Maharaj as they used to refer to Shivaji. This was an indication that the people had great sympathy for their leader’s sacrifice.



Home Rule League and Lucknow Congress

Valentine Chirol had written a book *Indian Unrest* in 1910. In this book he had made serious allegations against Tilak. These articles of Chirol were also published in the London daily 'Times'. Chirol had said that Tilak was the man behind the murder of Commissioner Rand and Ayerst. Chirol had also accused him for instigating violence and instilling opposition of Muslims in the minds of the young generation. Tilak denied these allegations and filed a case of defamation against him.

Chirol sent a copy of that notice to Bombay government as soon as he received it. There was something fishy in that. It was the Bombay government which had provided evidence against Tilak to Chirol. The case carried on for quite long. Later on when Tilak went to London even then the case was still going on there.

Home Rule League

Despite these hardships Tilak continued with his mission. Within the Congress he had to fight for the principles of Garam Dal. But he fully involved himself in his mission – "Self Government and Self Management." He started motivating people for 'Home Rule'- Swashasan. He spent all his time in propagating 'Home Rule'. His old frail body had been reinforced with renewed energy.

The politics of the country was being vitiated and narrow minded forces were raising their heads. In 1906 Muslim League had been formed. The British government was backing it against the Congress. Congress

was deeply shocked by this development. Jawahar Lal Nehru describing the situation of that time wrote in his autobiography – “From the political viewpoint there was total passivity towards the end of 1912. Tilak was in jail. People of Garam Dal had been suppressed and due to lack of strong leadership, they were silent. After the completion of division of Bengal, it was quiet too. And Naram Dal people were focused on ‘Minto-Morle Reform scheme’.

Mrs. Besant too had joined the Congress. Tilak had inspired the countrymen with renewed vigour. Tilak wanted the government to kneel down through his boycott movements. But Gokhale and his Naram Dal was not supporting him. In the Congress Session of 1914, Feroz Shah Mehta had vehemently opposed the resolution of Garam Dal. On the insistence



of Mrs. Besant, the proposal was sent to a committee. Next session was held in Bombay. By that time Gokhale and Mehta, both had passed away. Tilak was not present in this session. Despite the opposition of Naram Dal, Garam Dal delegates were given opportunity to attend the Congress session, and the constitution of Congress was amended.

Just before the Bombay congress, in a meeting of Nationalists, discussion were held on the question of

establishing Home Rule League. On April 28, 1916 Home Rule League was formally constituted in Belgaum. Its objective was to achieve self governance under the British empire through fair means.

Infact, the Constitution of Home Rule League was a great achievement of Tilak's political career. He said that the time has come to make a demand that, "The reins of the country must be in the hands of countrymen." He applied all his force for this demand of self rule. *Kesari* also came out with many articles in its support. In Belgaum he delivered his first speech. After that a big rally was held in Ahmedabad.

Tilak's birthday was on July 23, 1916. He was presented a purse Rupees one lakh on this occasion. Before this no Indian leader was given such an honour. In 1916, Congress session was held in Lucknow. After nine years of struggle extremists (Garam Dal) had got a chance to participate in the Congress.

Government became alert and District Magistrate of Pune issued an order for Tilak to appear before a court. The order said, why not an amount of Rs 40 thousand be taken from you as guarantee for "good conduct". Later on Tilak appealed in the High Court, which rejected the order of the magistrate.

On June 7, 1916 in London, Home Rule League for India was constituted, Major Proham Pole was appointed its Secretary. A booklet entitled 'What India wants' was published in London. and the publicity of Home Rule League continued.

With the help of Baptista, Tilak prepared a draft bill for better administration in India.

In the birthday celebration of Tilak a demand was put forward to carry the work of Home Rule movement. Branches of the league were opened in Bombay, Kanpur, Calcutta, Allahabad, Madanpalli, Kumbakonam, Madurai, Madras, Kozikode (Calicut) and Ahmedabad. Tilak was directing leading Central Province and Bombay units of league.

Annie Besant was so much inspired by Tilak's Home Rule League that she established her own Home Rule League in Madras. Branches of League were spread all over India. The secretary of Tilak's League N.C. Kelkar, was running the Home Rule movement everywhere. Meantime Tilak was touring Karnataka. The government again became panicky. On November 20, in the public meeting at Gadag, government ordered him to conclude his meeting within five minutes.

Tilak said in one of his speeches- "We don't want to take away the rights of any country or nation. We do not want to dominate any country or its people. We only demand and want, what is our birthright (that is Swarajya - Home Rule).

Lucknow Session

After establishment of the Home Rule League, in September 1916, the Congress session was held in Lucknow. The rift which had developed in Surat Congress, was resolved in Lucknow. Compromise was also reached with the Muslim League.

In Lucknow it was Tilak who received a lot of prominence. Tilak travelled from Bombay to Lucknow in a special train and on the way, at every station, he was given a grand reception. On the resolution related to 'Swarajya', Tilak said – " We are fighting for 'Swarajya'. Congress has been fighting. Its first voice was heard at Hoogli, ten year before. At that time, this demand was made by a great, veteran, Parsi patriot of Bombay Dadabhai Naoroji. There were some differences which cropped up. Some people were of the view that soon a massive programme be chalked out for this purpose. There were others who said that this work cannot be done in such a haste. Ten years ago, this was the reason of rift and I am happy that I lived for there ten years and saw, that in this session, we two are again raising own voices together with shoulder to shoulder. We did not only see way out of these difference, we could also see the end of differences between Hindus and Muslims. In the united

provinces, we are thus, fully united and Lucknow has given us this proud movement.”

Tilak accepted the separate electoral system in the country. He was not in favour of depleting his strength and power in resolutions and legislations. He had a dream – The country must be free, must be undivided swarajya should be attained and bureaucracy's power must be in moderation.

Tilak was in minority at Lucknow. But people were crazy of him and at that time no other leader was so powerful. Because of his sacrifice, simplicity, trust and devotion he had become an undisputed leader of the people.

Initially, it was planned to take Tilak in a car in a procession but the youth were keen to draw his cart themselves. Tilak was heavily garlanded. The procession moved on through a long route and his cart was being drawn by the youth.

Government's suppression measures

The British government became nervous due to impact of Tilak and Home Rule League. In Madras also, the Home Rule League movement of Mrs. Annie Besant was going on. Mrs. Besant and her two colleagues were put to house-arrest. Punjab government had banned the entry of Tilak in Punjab. Delhi government had also imposed similar restrictions. Bombay government was mulling to linger on the trial of Chirol, Government of Indian's Home Secretary and Viceroy were having doubt about loyalty of Home Rule league leaders towards the British Empire. Government of India had directed the provincial governments to try the Home Rule agitators and the students should not be allowed to take part in their meetings.

In October, the general body meetings of Congress and Muslim league were held in Allahabad according to which a delegation consisting

of Tilak, Gandhi, Jinnah, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Motilal Nehru met India Minister Montague and the Viceroy on 26 November.

On November 27, Tilak again met India Minister. Despite the failure of the Meeting Montague wrote, - “Today, Tilak is the most influential leader in India. His procession, after the meeting with me, was infact his victory procession ‘ He is the real motivator of the Congress-League plan. Tilak whole heartedly threw himself in the Home Rule Movement.

Indian Home Rule and Recruits of World War

Meanwhile Gandhiji had returned from South Africa and was about to enter the politics of the country. Influence of Gokhale’s Naram Dal was decreasing while Tilak’s star was on the rise. Mrs. Besant was elected Congres president in 1917. This was the victory of Tilak and Home Rule League Movement. With the sucesss of Home Rule Movement, Naram Dal could not stand on feet.

In the main resolution emphasis was laid on to making a law soon by the British parliament to ‘establish a responsive government in India and also about deciding about the time frame when total home rule (Swashasan) could be given to India. On the Congress League plan, more than ten lakh people had already signed.

Tilak Moved the resolution that complete home rule be given within fifteen years. In other resolutions he demanded the release of Shourat Ali and Mohammad Ali who were under confinement since 1914.

In the World War of 1914-18, Britain too became a part of it. It was confident that ‘with the bait of home rule, support of people of India could be bargained.’ Gandhiji had faith in the intention of British government and he was supporting the recruitment of Indian soldiers in the British army to help the government in these difficult times. Tilak wanted that in exchange of India’s help Britishers should also hand over some rights to India. Even at his old age he was prepared to join the war,

but he had his doubts on the polices of Britishers. Due to his apprehensions, Tilak, was not invited to war conference held in Delhi in 1918. The viceroy called only Gandhi ji for discussions. But India Minister Montague was of the view that had he been the viceroy he would have certainly called Tilak to Delhi because then he was the most powerful person. If he wished he could provide solid support in the war.

War Conference

But, Tilak was invited for ‘provincial war conference’ held later in Bombay under the chairmanship of Lord Willingdon. Like Viceroy, Governor also gave assurance to people of India. Tilak wanted to propose an amendment to the resolution of the Governor but he was not allowed to do so. His speech was interrupted time and again. Ultimately, Tilak got down from the stage and left the meeting.

In a meeting held in Kirloskar theatre of Pune Tilak, had asked a question, “They (Britishers) tell us – crisis is looming large over India. What we have to do with that? Why should we come forward to defend that India in which we don’t have any right, in which we are treated as slaves?

Tilak was in favour of recruitment of Indian soldiers for the British army, but he also wanted that Indian soldiers should be treated at par with the British soldiers in terms of rights and ranks. His condition was the government should first give assurance that Indians will get commission or officers rank.

He had already promised to help recruit five thousand soldiers from Maharashtra alone and had sent a cheque for fifty thousand rupees to Gandhiji for helping British government. Tilak was of the opinion that we should take advantage of the crisis in which the Britishers were involved. Gandhiji was not in favour of putting any condition for the help to British government and he returned the cheque back to Tilak.

The firm attitude of Tilak later culminated into a big fight. In the Bombay Congress, Mrs. Annie Besant presented the proposal of recruitment. The proposal was accepted. But due to this, she lost her credibility in Madras and all over country. Many of the supporters of her Home Rule League became followers of Tilak Maharaj!

Meantime Montague Chemsford Reforms had been announced. According to which, provisions were made to increase the number of members of provincial councils and to appoint some Indians as ministers. But the actual power would remain with the British governor. Tilak said, this home rule is just like a penny in a pond.

Mrs. Besant had withdrawn herself from the volatile politics of the country. Tilak became busy with sending delegates of Home Rule League to England after its establishment. He had collected one and half lakhs of rupees from people for this purpose.



In England

In the beginning of 1918, it was decided to send Tilak, Karandikar, Khaparde and Pal to England as a part of a delegation of Home Rule League. First World War was going on those days, but somehow British government issued them passports.

Before departure Tilak said, “There are only two options for England – either give us ‘Swarajya’, or wash your hands off from India for ever. Give us Swarajya and we will help you in war. Otherwise your empire is in danger.”

On the way, in Colombo, he was warmly welcomed. Next day Tilak spoke on ‘Buddhism Versus Hinduism’. There he was informed by the British government that all the passports have been cancelled.

To protest against it, a meeting was held in Bombay which was presided by Mr. Jinnah. In the meeting held on April 8, Mr. Jinnah criticized the decision of the British government. Presiding over the public meeting he said that ‘the British government has got the ears but has no eyes’. The reason for having no eyes was the cover of fear cast over the eyes. On 18 April, Tilak sent a telegram to Viceroy and asked to let him go to London in connection with the civil case against Valentine Chirol. Ultimately, the government allowed Tilak to go in connection with the case, but on certain conditions. At the end of November, Tilak reached London. There was restriction on Tilak’s political activities. He applied for removal of those restrictions. The application was accepted.

Tilak wanted the independence for the country. Even in England he remained very busy. He had no time for sightseeing and amusement.

There he could spare some time to visit British Museum, India office Library and House of Commons only.

He took Indian meals avoid the cold he wore long overcoat, pant, woolen socks and shoes in place of dhoti-kurta but he never used a tie. Many people took him to be a bishop.

In the floor below the room where Tilak stayed, lived Baptista. Tilak opened an office of Home Rule league there. He published a booklet titled : Right of self-determination to India". He arranged distribution of one million pamphlets in Britain and Ireland. He also gave a new look to 'India' newspaper. Apart from that, he took part in many political meetings, participated in social functions and discussed about India's independence with the British and Indian friends. Once a student asked him, " suddenly, why you have become very soft?"



Tilak replied- "Experience has taught me that without gaining power, nothing can be achieved. And that power will be through 'Swashasan' or Self-rule.

In England, leaders of the liberal party had supported India's independence, while in England, Tilak strongly raised the voice of India and home rule. He returned after thirteen months.

Trial of Chirol

In London, the hearing of Chirol's case had began before a jury in the court of Justice Darling. Government gave full support to Chirol. The Bombay Chronicle had exposed the partiality of the government. But the British were blind despite having eyes. While the British government was providing total support to Chirol, it was not ready to provide even basic of facilities to Tilak. After one month, the verdict was delivered in favour of Chirol and Tilak had to pay the compensation.

The entire country was shaken by this strange case. It was a blatant case of official favoritism.

In a meeting in Bombay declaration was made to set up a Tilak fund.' Gandhi ji said in this meeting that only rich man wins the case. To contribute to the Tilak fund was a national duty. Until Tilak's return to India an amount of three lakh rupees had been collected in the 'Trust'. This was an example of Tilak's popularity.

Black Law

After the war was over, the Britishers backed out from their words and to suppress people's agitation they promulgated Rowlatt's Act in the country. Gandhiji was himself leading the movement. The repressive measures of the British government started moving fast. In Punjab, the repressive measure of government crossed all limits. In Amritsar, the massacre of Jallianwala took place. A countrywide strike was going on against it. Men and women were being arrested in large numbers. At that time Tilak was in London. But he was sad for not being able to participate in that movement. He took part in the rallies, held to protest against Jallianwala Bagh massacre, in London.

He supported direct resistance. He was fed up with the so called reforms. In 1918, Tilak was elected the President of the Congress. But, since he was in London, Pt. Madanmohan Malviya was made the president.

The massacre of Jallianwala Bagh happened when at the behest of Mahatma Gandhi, the Rowlatt Act was being opposed in the entire country. Like many other towns in India, a protest meeting was held at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. The ground was surrounded from all sides with high walls. There was only one gate for exit. There were nearly 10,000 people in the meeting. The meeting had just begun, when General Dyer came there with armed sepoys and started firing from a distance of sixty meters without giving any warning to the people. In panic when the people ran towards the gate, firing was directed towards that side. Public was trapped there as “ a mouse is trapped in a cage.” A total of 1650 rounds were fired. Gen Dyer left the place only when he exhausted the ammunition. According to government records a total of 379 people were killed and more than 1200 were injured.



Last Journey

On November, 27, 1919 Tilak came back to Bombay. Thousands of people were present to welcome him. He was given a grand public reception and presented a purse. In Pune also he was given a grand reception. From Pune he went to Madras. After that he left for Amritsar. Prior to his reaching Amritsar, Indian Reform Bill was passed in the British parliament. As per this act, thousands of people who were arrested under martial law, were to be set free. Besides an appeal was made to Indian people to accept the government reforms and cooperate with government in implementing these reforms. Tilak's opinion about that bill was, "We are ready to cooperate with the government but this



cooperation should not be one-sided.” He wanted to thank Montague for these reforms, but at the same time, he was a guardian of the prestige of the nation. So, he was willing to cooperate only if there was cooperation from the Britishers.

Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi both reached Amritsar. Till that time, Gandhi had complete trust in the honesty of the Britishers. That’s why he opposed Tilak’s proposal to put conditions for cooperation. But later, Tilak convinced Gandhiji about his views. They wanted take whatever was given and then ask for more later. On the other side, there were extremist leader like Deshbandhu Chitranjan Das who wanted to reject these reform. Tilak was assigned the job of preparing a draft proposal on behalf of Congress regarding reforms. The proposal was adopted unanimously. In the resolution, reforms were dubbed as incomplete, unsatisfactory and disappointing. It was demanded that India be given complete self-rule (home rule).

The Reforms should be implemented in such a way that it should pave the way for establishing a full fledged self ruled government. In his speech also Tilak said, “We want to tell the whole world that we are not satisfied with the reforms and we will continue our fight. We will try to take best advantage of these reforms and will continue to demand for more reforms.”

Meanwhile, such incidents like these happened and Mahatma Gandhi lost his trust in the British government and declared that, “It is a sin to cooperate with this evil government in any manner whatsoever.” Among these incidents was the one about removal of Caliph of Turkey. Turkey was defeated in war and its Caliph was removed by the British government and its Allies, which had annoyed the Muslims of India greatly. The second incident was the Hunter committee report. This committee was set-up to investigate the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh. The report had fabricated the massacre story by terming it “a grave blunder and “unfortunate”. Due to these incidents, Gandhiji had started opposing the

“entry into the Council. Tilak was still in its favour. He wanted to support it in the Congress Session was to be held in the month of August. He was confident that Gandhiji will also be with him in the end.

However destiny had some other plans. Tilak’s health had started deteriorating even when he was in Mandalay Jail. Then, the cold of England had also took a toll on his health. Immediately after returning from England he had to work hard for Amritsar Congress, which deteriorated his health further. To take rest he went to Singhgadh. But because of increasingly deteriorating political situation of the country people used to reach there to seek his advice. Meanwhile, he participated in an astrological Conference in Sangli and incorporated changes in the Indian almanac. This was a great achievement as conservative astrologers also agreed to calculate scientifically, movement of stars-planets according to Greenwich Mean Time.

From this conference he straight away went on a tour of Sindh. The very hot condition there and continuous journey affected his health badly. His bold voice slowed down. Eyesight and hearing senses also weakened. From Hyderabad, Sindh, he straightaway went to Solapur where he took part in Bombay provincial conference and gave a speech in favour of the manifesto of Congress Democratic Party. The Citizens of Pune presented him a purse of three lakh rupees which they had collected for him to contest the trial of Chirol in May. Such a large purse was not presented to any other Indian leader earlier.

For next two months he was busy campaigning in favour of council entry against the non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji. In the beginning of July, he suffered an attack of malaria. His friends finally forced him to take some rest. Meantime the case of Tai Maharaj again crept up. Though the case was decided in favour of Jaganath, yet the conspiracy against him was going on. Despite being affected by Malaria he had to travel to Bombay. Though he won the case but his health deteriorated. On July 21, he left his home for the last time. He was affected by pneumonia on the same day. On July 23, people celebrated his birthday. On that day his

health was slightly better. On 26th July his health started deteriorating and best treatment was given but all in vain.

On Aug 1, 1920, Tilak left for his heavenly abode. The whole country cried in grief. Thousands of people thronged Bombay to have a last glimpse of him. The roads of Bombay hardly had any space to stand and move. His funeral procession was a manifestation of people's love and affection for him. It seemed as if a human ocean was cheering Tilak Maharaj.

Vitthal Bhai Patel had seen this multitude of crowds and had recollected the awesome image of Tilak. He had said "Lokmanya Tilak was a great personality. The credit for taking politics away from the rooms of armed chair politicians to the masses goes to Lokmanya Tilak only.

He understood the pulse of people well. He knew very well how much people have to sacrifice in the struggle for freedom. That's why he carried forward the national movement.

Tilak and Gokhale

In the history of a Congress Dr. Sitaramaiya had written about Tilak and Gokhale – " Tilak and Gokahle, both were Brahmins both were patriots. Both made great sacrifices. But by nature they were poles apart from each other. Gokhale belonged to the Naram Dal while Tilak belonged to Garam Dal. Gokhale wanted to reform the present system while Tilak wanted to change it. Gokhale had to work with feudalism but Tilak had to fight against it. Gokhale had faith in cooperation and tolerance. Gokhale's policy was to win over the foreign power while Tilak's was to change it. Gokhale was dependent upon support of others, while Tilak knew to stand on his feet: Gokhale was inspired from high and educated class while Tilak got his inspiration from people and masses while Gokhale's workplace was legislative assembly, Tilak's was the village. Gokhale's language was English while Tilak preferred Marathi. Gokhale's goal was autonomous rule through which Indians had to clear the tests

designed by Britain. Tilak' goal was swarajya (freedom) which is the birthright of every Indian, and which they will achieve from foreigners. Gokhale was moving with his time while Tilak was moving ahead of his time."

* * *

My father had shown me a picture on Tilak's anniversary. Dark glowing complexion, long nose, bright eyes and dark red turban. I see each and every line of this picture clearly and his entire life rolls before my eyes.

Gandhiji had rightly said, "Tilak's life is an open book and we are reading it even today." The ray of light comes in dark. That becomes a shining pearl in the course of history. In the darkness before Gandhi the time had stopped that night. Everybody was fretting in restlessness.

Tilak occupies a very high place in the political scenario of India. But he had no attachment to politics. He was a freedom fighter and to achieve this only he entered into politics. Once a journalist asked him, "what do you want to do after gaining Independence?"

Tilak's eyes brightened with a flash. He simply said – "I want to spend rest of my life as a maths teacher in a school."

Gandhi described this simplicity of Tilak as the invaluable capital of his service to the nation. Tilak had plenty of this capital. This capital grew much more even after he was separated from any institution or school or organization by resigning. He had become habitual of spending his capital in national tasks. This was his commitment. He had joined the eternal journey of sacrifice never to be separated from it ever.





Ek Kadam Swachhata Ki Aur

Bal Gangadhar Tilak occupied an important place in the Indian politics. His famous slogan *Swaraj (Self Rule) is my birthright* reverberated across the country during the freedom struggle. Apart from politics, Tilak also made his mark in the field of journalism.

In this book, the author Vishnuchandra Sharma has dwelt upon the various facets of Tilak's life.



Price : ₹ 95.00



Publications Division
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Government of India



ISBN: 978-81-230-2790-6
CHL-ENG-TR-176-2017-18